Vol. V. Numb. 6.

THE OBSERVATOR.

Remarks on the want of Seamen. The Neceſſity of the Preſervation of our Sailors, lies First, *In Regard to their Proviſions.* Secondly, *In Regard to the Perſons Employ'd as* Phyſicians *or* Surgeons *in the Navy.* Thirdly, *In Regard to the Medicines made uſe of. Of a* Potatoe Clerk *in the Navy.*

From Wednesday April the 3d, to Saturday April the 6th, 1706.

Obſ. HOneſt *Country-man*, the laſt time we met, we employ'd our time in Diſcourſing of the *Publick Affairs*; how it may be taken we know not; but as long as we Talk and Contrive for the *Common Good*, ſo long are we in the right; and if any, who think themſelves Gall'd in their Management, do Winch and Kick at us, that does not ſhow us to be in the wrong. Some Men in Great Offices would perſwade us, That no Perſons ought to deſcant on their Management; as if a ſort of *Infallibility* attended a Great Office, and that *Judgment*, *Juſtice* and *Honeſty* were inſeperable Concomitants of a Great Officer.

This Notion being put into Practice, by Ruining ſuch as have Contriv'd for the *Publick Good*, Repreſenting all Projects for the *Common Profit*, as Complaints againſt Men in Offices, which now is become a deadly Sin; all ſuch Uſeful Projections have been ſlighted to the Diſadvantage of the *Publick*. 'Twas but t'other day, a Gentleman, in a *Coffee-Houſe*, was reading the Queens *Proclamation* for putting in Execution *An Act of Parliament for the Encouragement and Encreaſe of Seamen, and for the Better and Speedier Manning Her Majeſties Fleet*, &c. the Gentleman lik'd the Method very well; but when he was told, *That the ſame Thing had been Printed on the* Obſervator *long before the Paſſing of that Act*, he ſaid, *That the* Obſervator *was a Raſcal, and wonder'd that the Parliament, or any Body elſe, would hearken to what ſuch a Fellow ſaid.* So that, *Country-man*, let you and I Contrive never ſo well for the *Publick*, we ſhall be, by ſome People, accounted *Raſcals* for our Pains.

Indeed the Decreaſe of our Seamen has, a long time, been the Lamentation of all Honeſt Men. But the Repair of that loſs has not come under the Conſideration of the *Publick*, till this laſt *Seſſions* of *Parliament*. I won't accuſe the whole People of *England* with want of Foreſight, the chief thing in *Politicks*; but, certainly, had we look'd from *Stem* to *Stern* of our *Naval Affairs*, we ſhould have foreſeen the want of *Seamen*, and in time have prevented that Evil. My poor Endeavours, for ten or twelve Years laſt paſt, have been on this Head; and had the laſt *Parliament* hearkned to my *Propoſals*, this *Parliament* would not have been forc'd to Contrive Methods for Manning the *Fleet*. But the laſt *Parliament* had other Buſineſs, and ſo much minded the *Church*, that they forgot the *State* and the *Weal-Publick*.

It may not be amiſs now to Reflect on the Means by which we have loſt our Seamen, becauſe it is now in our Power to prevent ſuch Evils for the future. I have often touch'd on this Head, and ſhall not any farther inſiſt on the Abuſes the Sailors have received from their Commanders in the late *War*, which were *Barbarous* and *Unſufferable*: And the Corruption of our *Naval Diſcipline* was the Generation of *Pirates*, and forc'd many, too many, of our Able Sailors into Foreign Service.

I ſhall inſiſt only on two Points of Management in the Navy, by which, where there has been one Man kill'd by Shot, there has been twenty loſt in this and the late *War*, and which, if not Remedied, will ſtill leſſen the Number of our Sailors, and that is the *Victualing* Aſhore, and the *Surgery* at Sea.

To preſerve Health, good and wholeſome Proviſion is required: This is what is Neceſſary, and 'tis what the *Parliament* has made Proviſion for. 'Twould be an Invidious Subject for me to give an Account of Men loſt by bad Proviſions, from the Mortality in *Nevil's* Squadron in the *Weſt-Indies* in the late Reign, down to the vaſt Hoards of Stinking Proviſions at *Cuckolds-Point* in this Reign: My Deſign of ſpeaking to theſe Points is only by way of Amendment, if my poor Endeavours may put our Superiours in mind of ſo Neceſſary a Concern.

The chief Defect has been in the *Fleſh* and *Bread*, the Staff of Life, both by Sea and Land. The firſt has proceeded from the Ignorance of the Perſons concerned, in not knowing the true Method of Curing and Pickling the *Fleſh*. Sometimes by making the Pickle too weak, that the *Fleſh* becomes ſlimy and ſoon after ſtinks; upon Complaint hereof, to Remedy that Evil, they have run into another Extream, by making the Pickle too ſtrong, by which means the Gravy and Moiſture of the Meat is exhauſted and render'd unfit for Nouriſhment, which Evil will never be mended till ſuch time as Perſons are employ'd in the *Victualling*, that know right well the Nature and Strength of all ſorts of *Salt*.

The *Bread* has been Defective, by its being made of undue Mixtures, as of *Rye*, *Peaſe*, &c. contrary to the Rules of the *Navy*, and the Inſtructions from the *Admiralty*, which Orders the *Bread* to be made of all *Wheat*. Which Practice I believe has been uſed in the *Queens* own *Bake-Houſe*; but that not being capable of working *Bread* enough for the Service of the *Navy*, the *Victuallers* have been forc'd to contract with the *Town Bakers* for great Quantities of *Bread*, who have made uſe of theſe undue Mixtures for the ſake of Filthy Lucre.

The next great Concern is the *Phyſical* and *Chirurgical Part*, the Care of the Invalids and Wounded Seamen. And on this Point I ſhall not

not look back, and fling a Load of Rotten *Rhubarb* in the Face of ſome, that the Modeſteſt Man in *England* would call *Knaves*. I ſpeak only by way of Prevention, and on this Head two things are to be conſider'd. 1. The *Phyſician* or *Surgeon* Employ'd in the Service; and 2. The Medicines that compoſe his Cheſt.

The Perſon Employ'd in taking Care of the Seamens Health ought to be one well ſkill'd both in *Phyſick* and *Surgery*, but chiefly in *Phyſick*, becauſe we have always more Sick Men than Wounded on Board the Fleet, and chiefly in this Expedition, becauſe we ſhall have ſo many Men in our Fleet that never were before at Sea, and by alteration of Climates will alter in their State of Health, which is eaſily repaired by proper Medicines, Adminſter'd by Able *Phyſicians* that have Experience in *Phyſick* and the Alterations that Heat and Cold make on *Humane Bodies*. And, therefore, to this End it is very neceſſary that all ſuch as go into the Service in this Nature be Examined by Able Perſons, and have a Certificate of their Abilities in *Phyſick* as well as *Surgery*.

The Medicines that compoſe the Cheſts ought to be Examined as well as the Perſon that Adminiſters them. If we have not good and fit Medicines, as well as Able *Phyſicians*, we had as good have neither. If our *Surgeons* Cheſts are fill'd with the Refuſe of *Apothecaries* Shops, with ſuch Medicines as are not fit for uſe Aſhoar, they are of no uſe at Sea, and the ſame Methods muſt produce the ſame Effects, our Men muſt Languiſh and Dye, and the Decreaſe of Seamen will be greater than the Encreaſe can be; we loſe a Sailor by bad Proviſions, or Medicines, in a few Days, but we can't rear one in many Years.

'Tis pitty that Intereſt, or ſomething worſe, ſhould procure a particular Advantage to ſome particular Perſons to furniſh Medicines for the *Army* or *Navy*, when not only the Lives of the *Sailors* and *Soldiers*, but the Safety of the *Kingdom* depends upon it. The Medicines have been chiefly *Galenical*, which Medicines and Practice, of late Years, have been, with good Reaſon, exploded by the Ableſt *Phyſicians*. Theſe Medicines, by the change of Climates, ſoon loſe their Vertue, whereas the *Chymical* will laſt good under all the alterations of Heat and Cold, or change of Climates; and, therefore, I humbly conceive it neceſſary, That every *Surgeon* do fit his own Cheſt with ſuch Medicines as Able *Phyſicians* ſhall Approve of, both in reſpect of Quantity for the *Voyage*, and Quality in reſpect of the Goodneſs of the Medicines, and their Uſefulneſs at *Sea*.

Country-m. Maſter, you Talk of Able *Phyſicians* and *Surgeons* at *Sea*; a Friend of mine told me, *That t'other day an Hoſpital-Ship was Vacant, and the Honeſt Doctor that ſav'd the Queens Ship at* Vigo, *when the Commander, and all the Men, but four or five, Ran and Swam away, and had nothing given him for his Pains, put in for that Hoſpital, but he could not obtain it, becauſe he could not get in with an* Iriſhman, *a* Deer-Joy, *that is a* Clerk *in the* Navy.

Obſ. That would ha' been a ſmall Favour in regard to that Gentlemans Merrit: One would think *Phyſicians* and *Surgeons*, that have ſerv'd ſo long and ſo faithfully in the *Army* and *Navy*, ſhould be ſent for on ſuch Occaſions, and have the Refuſal of ſuch Employments; it would be ſo, had the Parties concerned ſo juſt a regard to the Lives of the *Sailors* as could be wiſh'd. But, *Country-man*, if thou can'ſt find out this Honeſt *Doctor*, tell him, from me, That the next time he puts in for ſuch an Employment, he ſhould, beforehand give the *Potatoe Clark* a good Doſe of his *Aurum Potabile*.

Country-m. His *Aurum Potabile*, his *Aurum Pocketabile* you mean. I am ſure that will ſooner Roaſt his *Potatoes*.

Obſ. Well, *Country-man*, this is a ſerious Point, and I am ſorry to hear ſo little Regard is had to *Ability* and *Merrit* in the Diſpoſal of ſuch Offices. 'Tis not the ſame Caſe with the poor Sailors, as 'tis with us Aſhore: If we fall into the Hands of an *Ignorant Pretender* we can ſoon change our *Phyſician*, but the People of the Sea are confin'd to the Doctor of their own Ship, they have no Friends to Nurſe them, or to complain of their ill Uſage; and therefore the Truſt repoſed in a *Sea Doctor* is more than ſome People imagine. He ought not only to be a Perſon well ſkill'd in the *Medicinal Science*, but he ought to have within his Breaſt a *Conſcience*, that ſhall oblige him to a Faithful Diſcharge of his Duty: But if to his *Ignorance* be added a *Vicious Habit*, if he be as *Prophane* as he is *Ignorant*, Lord have Mercy on the Bodies of thoſe that are committed to the Charge of one that takes ſo little Care of his own Soul. I don't ſpeak this by way of Recrimination, tho' I know the *Sea Surgeons* are too too Wicked, but to put them in mind of their Duty, and to let 'em know that they muſt be Accountable to *God*, as well as *Man*, for the Diſcharge of their Office.

Nor would I have our Superiours in the Management of the *Navy* believe, that I ſpeak this by way of Reflection on their *Conduct*. All Men muſt imagine, that in ſo great a Concern, ſome things that in themſelves ſeem little, and yet are of the greateſt Importance, may be overlook'd, and the hints of a By-Stander, who has no other Intereſt than that of the Publick, may be improv'd to a greater Advantage, than he who had the firſt thought could have done, had he the Power of ſo doing in his Hands.

The Gentlemen concerned in the Management of the *Admiralty* have met with almoſt unſurmountable Difficulties; and that we have part of our Fleet already Sail'd, ſo very well Mann'd, and the reſt in ſuch a forwardneſs is what we could not Rationally expect, and for which good Service they deſerve the Thanks of the whole Kingdom: But theſe Difficulties may inform us what Care ought to be taken of the Lives of our Sailors, that we may no more be brought under ſuch preſſing Circumſtances; and if the Hints that I have given be of any Publick Benefit, I ſhall be fully ſatisfy'd with the Reward of having done my Country any Service, which was the real Deſign of my entering upon this Diſcourſe.

Country-m. Maſter, Pray God Bleſs your Hearty Endeavours for the good of your Country. And we'll go to Bed with a good Health to the Navy of *England*.

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